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10 April 1967

STAFF NOTE

SUBJECT: North Korean War Threats

1. The referenced FBIS material^{*} is a fair sample of the overt Pyongyang line on the many shooting incidents in the Korean DMZ area over the past six months.

2. Why this seeming frenzy of excitement and why the apparent increase in North Korean violence along the DMZ?

3. There are probably two main reasons: (a) Pyongyang has decided that some heightening of tension along the DMZ would provide Hanoi and the Communist World with (relatively riskless and inexpensive) evidence of North Korean solidarity in the anti-US struggle in Asia; and, (b) Pyongyang seeks to drive home to South Koreans -- on the eve of national elections -- the lesson that the Pak government is leading South Korea toward another civil war and, at the same time, has jeopardized its defenses by shipping 50,000 troops to South Vietnam.

* We refer to the items on pp. ggg 1-9 of the 7 April "Asia and Pacific" Daily Report.

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4. Pyongyang also sees the heightened tension as useful in strengthening the arguments of some South Korean leaders and opposition politicians against further ROK participation in the Vietnam War. It may also hope to forestall any redeployment of US troops from Korea to Vietnam (though obviously there are psychological and other potential advantages for North Korea in any US troop reduction in the ROK).

5. Another Pyongyang motive, perhaps more important than we know, is its need to stimulate greater effort on the part of a disillusioned population on the lagging economic front. Perhaps too, the North Koreans are inciting a war scare to impress the Russians with their need for even greater quantities of military equipment, particularly SAMs and MIG-21s (which now appear to be moving into North Korea from the USSR in significant numbers). To turn the argument about: perhaps the Soviets agreed to provide such equipment on condition that Pyongyang do its bit along the DMZ (and provide some MIG-21 pilots for Hanoi -- which it has done).

6. The above is our way of saying that while further North Korean incursions in the DMZ area are likely to occur, we do not

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expect even a "limited objective" invasion in force of South Korea by North Korea in the months (or years) ahead. We continue to estimate that Pyongyang would judge the risks to be unacceptable.



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